



NA ALA HELE HAWAII TRAIL AND ACCESS SYSTEM

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Historical and Traditional Background on the Kipapa o Kihapi'ilani, Waianapanapa State Park and Hana Coastline

(Source: Division of State Parks)

Construction of the trail is attributed to Kihapi'ilani, the ali'i nui of Maui in the early 1600s. It bears his name in that it is generally called the Kihapi'ilani Trail or Kipapa o Kihapi'ilani (The pavement of Kihapi'ilani). In traditions and chants, it is the accomplishment that most prominently commemorates this chief and his reign. He was the second son of the paramount Maui chief, Pi'ilani, and his eventual successor. This particular public works project was said, by one source, to be the completion of the trail begun by his father which is known as the Hono-a-Pi'ilani Trail. Another source has Kihapi'ilani being encouraged by 'Umialiloa, the Hawaii Island chief and Kihapi'ilani brother-in-law, to undertake this monumental task.

The stone paved trails built by Kihapi'ilani are portrayed as being four to six feet wide and extending along the rugged coast line and steep-sided gulches for at least 30 miles. It was a major public works project in that labor, including chiefs and commoners, had to be organized to accomplish the task. Lines were formed to carry the water-worn stones from their source along the coast or from stream beds. One reference claims that the trail started at Kawaipapa because the hard 'alä stones were plentiful in Kawaipapa gulch.

Segments of this trail could still be seen "in many places" in the late 1800s. Historic land uses, particularly the cultivation of sugar cane and road construction, have destroyed many segments.

Current Condition within Waianapanapa State Park

The assumption has been made that the existing segments of stepping-stone trail that run through Waianapanapa State Park and beyond are remnants of the Kihapi'ilani Trail. This coastal trail (Site No. 5340a) winds along the rugged and rocky coastline of the park and occasionally runs inland to bypass a point jutting out along the shoreline. Some segments of the trail alignment running through the Park have no stepping stones and are marked only by a cleared and worn path in the lava. It is not known if these are more modern trail alignments or if the water-worn stone were removed. The trail passes through coastal shrub vegetation dominated by naupaka and stands of hala forest.

In the Park, the stepping-stones are water-worn basalt cobbles ('alä) spaced 1.3 to 3.6 feet apart or what some have been described as being a "pace" apart. The worn and cleared sections are 2.6 to 3.9 feet wide. Segments of the trail have been disturbed by storm surf and by continued use. A few sections within the Park have been converted to gravel or concrete walkways.